Higher Degrees by Research Thesis Review - Guidelines

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Introduction

University of the Sunshine Coast seeks to ensure that higher degree by research theses of the highest possible quality are submitted for external examination. To facilitate this, the Principal Supervisor is responsible for ensuring the following quality assurance procedures are undertaken prior to submission for external examination of the thesis:

· Screening of the thesis with text matching software to support the avoidance of plagiarism; and
· An independent edit check of the thesis; and
· A formal review of the thesis by at least one other Supervisor or an independent peer reviewer.

1. Screening of thesis with text-matching software

The Principal Supervisor is able to carry out the text-matching plagiarism check using the SafeAssign module within the Blackboard learning management system (USC login required). Access to an existing course within Blackboard is required. Within a course area, select Control Panel > Course Tools > SafeAssign. Click Direct Submit and follow the instructions. The text-matching report should be reviewed thoroughly and, where necessary, discussed with the candidate. Further instructions on the use of SafeAssign can be found here, or contact ET Support.

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2. Independent edit check

Nomination of an editorial checker

The Principal Supervisor will nominate an independent individual to conduct the edit check. To be "independent", the nominated individual must not be a current (or previous) member of the supervision panel, and must not be one of the proposed thesis examiners. Faculties and Schools may recommend an appropriately qualified individual to undertake thesis edit-checks for its HDR candidates.

Support for editorial checkers

If a suitably qualified person who is external to USC is nominated to undertake the editorial check, the Faculty or School will seek to arrange compensation at a rate agreed with the editorial checker.

What the editorial checker should look for

The independent editorial checker will edit check the final thesis for matters including (but not limited to):

· Appropriate use of discipline-specific standards, including references and referencing style, formatting and presentation (particularly tables and graphs)
· Adherence to the USC thesis presentation guidelines
· Quality of the written work, including appropriate and consistent English expression and the presence of grammatical or spelling errors.

The independent editorial checker will make specific comments on the thesis (hard-copy or electronic), where appropriate, and provide a written report against the criteria above in relation to discipline specific standards and expectations.

Response to editorial checker's feedback

It is the responsibility of the supervision panel and the candidate to determine whether to incorporate the independent editorial checker's feedback into the final thesis. Supervisors should not approve a thesis for submission if they are not satisfied that the thesis is of a sufficient standard to pass external examination.

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3. Peer review of the thesis by a co-supervisor or independent reviewer

The Principal Supervisor plays the major role in working with the candidate in preparation of the final thesis, including the application of text matching software and arranging for edit check of the final document. The Principal supervisor will call upon the co-supervisors or independent peer reviewers for collective input from the supervision panel into the final thesis, considering the Examiners of HDR Theses - Guidelines

All members of a supervision panel should review and provide feedback on the final thesis. Supervisors should work collegially to ensure that any conflicts in opinion between the supervision panel members are resolved and that consensus is achieved in feedback provided to the candidate.

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